

## A DREAMER

By JAMES DREXEL TURNER

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"I want her. Why doesn't she come? What is keeping her? If she knew how much I wanted her she would come." With the strength of a man in delirium he pulled away from the nurse who tried to soothe him. Two doctors stood by the window and looked down into the hospital's green yard. The elder of them shut his watch-case with professional deliberation and went to the foot of the bed and looked at the man lying there, ugly and red with fever, long and emaciated.

"He has kept this up for 26 hours now," the nurse said. "He thinks he is here sometimes and begins to talk to her, whoever she is, and then he asks where she is, and says they are trying to keep her away from him."

"Have you any idea who 'she' is?" "No, sir. I should say she was his wife if he had ever had one, but everybody knows that he is a bachelor."

"Um," said the doctor. Everybody knew that Henry Lord was a bachelor. He had been a conspicuous bachelor for a number of years. It was always the third thing that was told about him; the first being that he was the greatest writer of plays in America, the second that his income was said to be \$300,000 a year. He had had an undisturbed field for ten years. He was 45 now and seemingly about to die of typhoid fever. They had brought him from the hotel where he lived when the disease developed itself and he was in the hands of experts. His physicians were being advertised in Paris and London as well as all the American cities by the bulletins they signed.

Lord looked into the doctor's face, with eyes pathetic in their appeal. "Ask her to come, won't you? She wouldn't refuse if she knew how my



"My Wife Is Here," He Said; "You May Go Away."

head ached. I want her so much. I can't stop thinking until she comes." "Who is it you want, Lord?"

"Louise," in a tone of pettish impatience. Coming up the terrace that led to the front of the hospital was a spruce, carefully dressed man with the look of arrested youth which seems to be a characteristic of men who have been actors. He stopped the doctors and respectfully asked for news of Mr. Lord.

"You are Mr. Lord's secretary, are you not?" Dr. Lincoln asked. "I am," and he presented his card. "Mr. Jarvis Owen." The elder doctor had a vague remembrance of having seen the name sometime, somewhere, and he held the card in his hand, thinking that undoubtedly this man went back to Lord's early days before he was quite so conspicuous a bachelor. "Do you know any friend of Mr. Lord's named Louise?"

Owen evidently started on a negative and then changed his mind. "Miss Louise Roslyn used to be a friend of his some years ago, or he used to know her. She acted in his first play." "Miss Louise Roslyn, the actress?" I haven't heard anything of her for years. I had forgotten there was such a woman. Were she and Lord particular friends?"

"No, not very, but they knew each other very well. She made his first piece and created a part in the second, and then they quarreled over something and she dropped out. She is the only Louise he has known—to my knowledge—for ten years, anyway."

"Where is she now? and what sort of a person is she?"

Again the man hesitated. "She is very much of a lady," he said finally. "Miss Roslyn always was a lady, both off and on the stage. She lives in New York, in this part of town, not far from here."

"Mr. Lord wants to see her. Do you think she would come? At least we suppose it is Miss Roslyn he wants to see."

Owen put his stick to his teeth and let his gaze wander around the lawn. The doctors had heard Lord give him his directions that first day of his illness. They knew that he was in the confidence of his employer. Indeed, he was known everywhere as Lord's confidential man.

"That can hardly be," he said. "Miss Roslyn has not spoken to Mr. Lord for seven years. I doubt if she has seen his face."

"You cannot account for delirium," the young doctor said. "May I see Mr. Lord?" Owen asked, finally.

"That would be impossible. He is delirious and in a very precarious condition indeed. It would be fatal if his mind were directed towards his affairs by the sight of you."

"Is he going to die?" "While there is life there is hope," the young doctor said with his most professional air.

"I understand," Owen said with a sigh. "He doesn't care much for life. I have heard him say that he had never had anything out of life but daydreams."

"Can you get Miss Roslyn to come?"

"I can try."

The tall woman with the plain black skirt and white shirt waist appeared very little like an actress as she stood on the outside of Lord's door in the sunny hospital corridor. Out of the corner of her eyes, the nurse at the table by the corridor window took in every detail of her dress and manner. All the nurses were interested in the case. This one had gold buttons in her apron and her cap and cuffs were coquettish accessories to her costume. She thought Miss Roslyn old and homely, and she felt sure that she "wasn't the one." A man who could write plays like Henry Lord and was a millionaire besides wasn't likely to waste his time over a frump like this. All the romance died out of it.

Dr. Lincoln had come up with Miss Roslyn and was giving her the final anxious directions.

"Let him see you. If he knows you, try and humor him. He is mad with delirium, and it will be like humoring a child."

"I am willing to try," Miss Roslyn said—she had a peculiar deep, contralto voice that carried to the nurse at the window—but it is almost impossible that he should know me. He hasn't seen me for half a dozen years. I am older now. And—he—I am nothing to him. You are mistaken if you think that. I never was anything to him, but I am willing to help him if I can."

The door to Lord's room opened and they went in. The nurse in the hall heard something like a man's hoarse sob.

Inside the nurse and the doctor walked toward the window. The woman knelt on the floor by the bed and took the ugly, emaciated head of the sick man against her bosom. "Louise," he gasped, "oh, Louise! I wanted you so! Sometimes I thought that I only dreamed you." He tried to laugh, and the sound was a husky rattle in his throat, a travesty of happiness. His eyes closed with exhaustion. The doctor came forward quickly and the nurse followed, catching up a stimulant. Lord opened his eyes and looked at them.

"My wife is here," he said; "she can take care of me now. You may go away."

Miss Roslyn's face flushed again, but she spoke calmly: "But they know so much more than I do. Take it—dear." The last word seemed to come easily, although she hesitated a heartbeat before saying it.

"I wish you would send them away, Louise; you can take care of me. I want only you. Never anybody but you—just you." The words trailed away and the long limbs settled themselves under the cover and he slept. It was an hour before she dared to take her arm away and leave him.

"The fever will probably break," the doctor told her. "I think your coming will have saved his life."

"I am very glad."

The doctor looked at her with a curiosity he could not repress. How came Henry Lord to call her his wife? Could it be possible—A man who has had a long practice as fashionable physician comes at last to a period when he no longer knows the emotion of astonishment.

Every time she went into his room (she lived at the hospital now) she waited until he had asked for his wife. He was getting stronger. They knew that sometime he would awaken normally. And one day it came. He opened his eyes and looked at his nurse sitting by his bed. She arose. "Do you want anything?" she asked. Involuntarily his eyes sought the door through which Louise was wont to come, and then his face settled into the heavy, ugly lines of the Henry Lord the world knew.

"I suppose," he said, "I have been amusing you with all sorts of nonsense—old plays, and that sort of thing." He did not listen to the polite remarks of the nurse, but turned his face to the wall.

That afternoon he asked to see his secretary for a moment. As Owen was going out Dr. Lincoln met him.

"Miss Roslyn?" the doctor said. "It seems to me that she needn't have disappeared in such a hurry."

Owen laughed. "Well, she did all she could for Mr. Lord, and she was needed at home. The baby has the measles."

The doctor stared at him. "Is she his wife?" he gasped. "Oh, no," Owen said; "she has been mine for six years."

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